**Abstract**

A development tool for a network based data processing system comprises a

document type developer for assembling document types from prestored object

components and for associating a set of states with each document type. Each

state defines at least one document property. The document types are used to

instantiate documents to form a data processing system, and to provide the data

processing system with state assignment functionality. The data processing

system assigns each instantiation a succession of states, where each state is

taken from the instantiation's set of states, thus applying the state's respective

property to the instantiation. A succession of properties is thereby defined for

the document type instantiation over the instantiation's life cycle.